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Affective characteristics of university students about English course and their attitude and thoughts toward the course

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to search affective characteristics of the students of Cyprus International University Foreign Languages School Preparatory Classes about English Course and their attitude and thoughts toward the course. The other aim of this research is to search affective characteristics of the students, their attitude and thoughts toward the course according to their faculty, gender, socio-economic level, high school type and high school success. 228 students at Preparation Classes of Cyprus International University in 2009-2010 Academic year form the sample of the research. The sample was chosen by suitable sampling method. "Attitude Scale about English Affective Area", which is used for measuring affective characteristics of the students, their attitude and thoughts toward the course, was developed by Gömleksiz (2003). Data collected in the research will be evaluated by "SPSS 15.0 for Windows". In the analysis of data, Kolmogorov-Sminornov test, non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test, Kruskal Wallis H-test and Scheffe Meaningfulness Test are applied to test whether the score means show normal distribution or not. Meaningfulness is accepted as .05 in the interpretation of the findings. As a result of the research it was found that attitude toward English of the students were not affected by gender, high school type, socio-economic level, on the other hand their attitude was affected meaningfully by faculty, and high school success (Faculty_{Chi-Square}=11,947 df=4 p<0,05; High School Success_{Chi-Square}=11,728 df=2 p<0,05).

© 2010 Elsevier Ltd. Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).*Keywords:* Attitude; preparatory school; English; attitude toward English; university student.

1. Introduction

In the world second language gain more importance than it has ever. In our country it gains much more importance too. Moreover in some schools or at some universities education language has become English. At my university the education language is English. So their success in English is very important. According to Mc Donough (1986) students' personal characteristics affect their success in learning foreign language directly or indirectly.

Attitude is a factor in the success of the students in learning second language. In this direction there are some researches about attitude toward English language in Turkey. Learning English is a complex process. Doing many researches in order to explain factors of effective and successful learning show that analyzing some factors is

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required (Brown, 1994). In language learning process there is a close relationship between success and attitude. Student is affected by his self success. In other words, while students' positive attitude is strengthened by his success and negative attitude is strengthened by failure. Student's negative attitude push student shows no effort to learn language (Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

As a result of Thadphoothon's study (1999) from Dhurakijpundit University, it was observed that successful students have positive attitude toward learning second language, and students who are unsuccessful have negative attitude toward learning second language.

The studies that Shah (1999) did on students who are unsuccessful in their courses support this information; students who did not have positive attitude toward language had low level of success.

The aim of the research is to analyze and compare the factors affecting attitude of the students of Foreign Languages School of Cyprus International University (CIU) toward English. Answers are sought to sub problems below in order to realize the aim.

1. Do attitude scores of students toward English differentiate meaningfully according to their gender?
2. Do attitude scores of students toward English differentiate meaningfully according to their departments?
3. Do attitude scores of students toward English differentiate meaningfully according to their socio-economic level?
4. Do attitude scores of students toward English differentiate meaningfully according to their high school types?
5. Do attitude scores of students toward English differentiate meaningfully according to their graduation success from high school?

1. Method

1.1. Universe- sample

The research is based on total of 228 students from CIU who were selected by appropriate sampling method. 64,5% (n=147) of the participants are male and 35,5% (n=81) of them are female. The sample includes students from education faculty 14,0% (n=32), engineering faculty 53,9% (n=123), fine arts 15,8% (n=36), communication faculty 4,8% (n=11) and faculty of arts and sciences 11,4% (n=26).

1.2. Data Collecting Tools

"Attitude Scale about English Affective Area", which is used for measuring affective characteristics of the students, their attitude and thoughts toward the course, was developed by Gömleksiz (2003). Scale includes 18 positive and 38 negative items out of 56 items. According to results of principal components analysis that is changed according to prime axis scale is one dimensional scale. Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was calculated as .95. according to the first results of the analysis KMO (Kaiser-Meyer_Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy) of the scale was found as 0.88, and Bartlett test was found as 12970,5.

1.3. Collection of data and analysis

Data collection tools were applied to the students in the classes by the researches. In the statistical resolution of the research, SPSS 12.0 was used. Kolmogorov-Sminornov test was used in order to test whether data, acquired from attitude scale, show normal distribution or not since Kolmogorov-Sminornov test is recommended to be used instead of Shapiro-Wilk in the case in which there are more attendant than 50 (Coakes and Steed, 1997; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2000). p value was found higher than 0,005, this was interpreted that scores do not show meaningful deviation from normal distribution since statistical (null) hypothesis was structured as "distribution of scores do not show meaningful differentiation from normal distribution" in Kolmogorov-Sminornov test (Büyüköztürk, 2006). When the results of Kolmogorov-Sminornov test was taken into consideration, Mann-Whitney U test that is one of non-parametric tests was used in paired comparison that is used in order to determine difference among attitude

score means that do not show normal distribution and Kruskal Wallis H-test and Scheffe Meaningfulness Test are applied for multiple comparisons. Statistical meaningfulness level was accepted as 0,05.

2. Results (Findings)

In order to compare scores that are gained from “Attitude toward English” that is the continuous variable of the research, whether variables are suitable for the test of normality or not was tested by Kolmogorov-Sminornov test. As a result of analysis, it was determined that Kolmogorov-Sminornov $\text{Attitude toward English} = 0,060$ $df=228$ $p=0,044$. It was determined that attitude toward English scores do not show normal distribution. Findings are given in the Table1.

It was determined that students’ attitude score means do not differentiate meaningfully as statistically according to gender (Mann-Whitney $U=5043,000$ Wilcoxon $W=15921,000$ $z=-1,910$ $p>0,05$), socio-economic level (Chi-Square=2,759 $df=2$ $p>0,05$) and graduated high school (Chi-Square=1,823 $df=4$ $p>0,05$).

Table 1. Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis H-test result of mean scores of attitude toward English according to independent variables.

Independent variables	n	Mean Rank	Sum of ranks	U / X ² Value	df	p value	Sign. Level	Mean Difference
Gender								
Female (1)	81	125,74	1185,00	043,000	1	0,056	p>0,05	-
Male (2)	147	108,31	15921,00					
Total	228							
Faculty								
Education (1)	32	149,13		11,947	4	0,018	p<0,05	5-1*
Engineering (2)	123	110,98						
Fine arts (3)	36	110,76						
Communications (4)	11	115,23						
Arts and Science(5)	26	93,40						
Total	228							
SEL								
Low (1)	21	92,57		2,759	2	0,252	p>0,05	-
Medium (2)	179	117,54						
High (3)	28	111,52						
Total	228							
High school type								
General (1)	107	118,01		1,823	4	0,768	p>0,05	-
Vocational (2)	38	108,49						
Anatolian (3)	37	111,57						
Private (4)	24	103,79						
Science, Super etc. (5)	22	124,43						
Total	228							
Graduation success								
Good (1)	58	139,28		11,728	2	0,003	p<0,05	1-2*
Medium (2)	120	108,86						1-3*
Bad (3)	50	99,29						
Total	228							

As it seen from the Table 1, as a result of comparison among score means of attitude with Kruskal Wallis H-test according to faculty and high school success independent variables it was determined that students' attitude toward English were affected by faculty and high school success ($F_{\text{Faculty}}=11,947$ $df=4$ $p<0,05$; high school success $\chi^2=11,728$ $df=2$ $p<0,05$). As a result of Scheffe meaningfulness test that was applied for determining groups that caused differentiation; it was determined that the differentiation caused from the students of Education and Arts and Sciences faculties; their attitude toward English were more positive. Students whose graduation grades were low caused the differentiation in terms of high school success.

3. Discussion

It was determined that faculty and high school success affected attitude of the preparatory school students' attitude toward English ($F_{\text{Faculty}}=11,947$ $df=4$ $p<0,05$; high school success $\chi^2=11,728$ $df=2$ $p<0,05$). The reason why the attitude of the students of Education faculty toward English was higher can be explained by their verbal abilities of using languages. And the reason why the attitude of the students of Arts and Sciences toward English were lower can be explained that they were related with numeric applications. According to high school success, students whose graduation degrees were low have also low attitude toward English. This can be the reflection of their failure to their attitude. In Thadphoothon's (1999) and Shah's (1999) studies, they found that successful students have high level of attitude learning foreign language, as it is same with our study..

It was determined that students attitude toward English score means do not differentiate meaningfully according to gender (Mann-Whitney $U=5043,000$ Wilcoxon $W=15921,000$ $z=-1,910$ $p>0,05$), socio-economic level ($\chi^2=2,759$ $df=2$ $p>0,05$) and high school that they graduated ($\chi^2=1,823$ $df=4$ $p>0,05$). It can be interpreted that the Preparatory students' attitude toward English are independent from gender, socio-economic level, and high school type variables that is to say attitude toward English does not affected by these variables. Any research that shows the same result cannot be found.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

This research aimed to analyze university preparatory students' attitude toward English according to gender, faculty of students, socio economic level, graduated high school type, and high school success variables. According to the results, it was found that attitude of the students of education faculty were higher than the students of arts and sciences faculty, and attitude of students whose high school graduation success were higher have more positive attitude toward English than students who were unsuccessful in the high school.

It is thought that working with bigger sample can be beneficial in order to generalization of the data that were collected. Moreover, in order to search the effect of the faculty on students' attitude analyzing their attitude toward their faculty or department is recommended.

When it is thought that students' perception of themselves as successful affect their attitude toward English, doing experimental researches that analyze the effect of increasing perception of self success can be recommended.

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